

VZCZCXRO2792  
PP RUEHDIR  
DE RUEHDE #0240/01 1771314  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P R 251314Z JUN 08  
FM AMCONSUL DUBAI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6039  
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 3077  
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 9240

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DUBAI 000240

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT: NEA/ARP BAGWELL AND MASILKOSIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [SCUL](#) [PGOV](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: BIG-NAME AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES SET TO ESTABLISH CAMPUSES IN DUBAI

REF: A. DUBAI 167

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¶1. (U) Summary: Michigan State University (MSU) and the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) have formally announced plans to establish permanent campuses in Dubai. MSU currently aims to enroll 800-1000 students, while RIT plans a full-scale residential campus of up to 3000-4000 students. Both universities will begin classes in the fall of 2008 and will gradually expand enrollment, facilities and degree offerings. Dubai authorities have warmly welcomed the two universities (and will fund a significant amount of the infrastructure costs), in line with clear guidance from HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, to transform Dubai into a regional education and knowledge hub. End Summary.

Classes to Begin in the Fall of 2008, Expansion Plans Are Already Underway

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¶2. (U) HH Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Higher Education and Research, and HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman of Dubai Silicon Oasis Authority (and better known as the Chairman of Emirates Airline) signed the formal agreement for the UAE with RIT on June 9. RIT President William Destler and Chairman of the Board Michael Morley represented RIT. Situated in the multi-billion dollar Dubai Silicon Oasis (DSO) complex, a government-sponsored high-technology park for microelectronics and semiconductor research, development, and production that reports to Sheikh Ahmed, RIT Dubai will begin offering courses in the fall of 2008. Continuing its "cooperative" tradition of combining hands-on work experience with traditional classroom curriculum, the university has established partnerships with regional and international companies to "foster an environment of innovation and creativity" that will compliment Dubai's developing business and industrial sector, said Dr. Mohammed Al Zaroni, Vice Chairman and CEO of Dubai Silicon Oasis. The school will initially offer six master's degree programs including electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, networking and systems administration, finance, human resource development, and service leadership and innovation. Prospective students can also choose between three advanced certificate programs in service leadership and innovation, project management, and computer information assurance. In subsequent years, the university plans to add additional graduate and certificate programs, as well as launch a comprehensive undergraduate curriculum on a residential campus in DSO. Over the next decade, RIT Dubai expects its enrollment to grow to approximately 4,000 students.

¶3. (U) MSU (with some 46,000 students in the US) Dubai will also launch its undergraduate and graduate programs beginning in the

fall of 2008. "MSU brings its status as a top research university, its commitment to civic engagement, and its tradition of global connectivity to this program," said MSU Dubai Executive Director Brendan Mullan. The university's campus will be located in Dubai International Academic City, a free zone dedicated to higher education. Initial undergraduate majors will include computer engineering, construction management, and telecommunication, information, and media, and family community services; master's degree offerings will include supply chain management, advertising, public relations, human resources and labor relations, and packaging. As additional undergraduate and graduate programs are offered over the next five years, MSU Dubai expects its enrollment to reach between 800-1000 students, also via a residential campus.

#### Strengthening Cross-Cultural Linkages

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¶4. (U) The establishment of the RIT and MSU campuses in Dubai will create additional opportunities for study abroad. Each school will feature exchange programs that provide opportunities for Dubai-based students to study in the US, as well as for American students to study in Dubai. Faculty will also be encouraged to participate in short and long-term teaching assignments in both Dubai and the US. All MSU and RIT degrees will have equal validity and equal requirements as those issued by both universities in the US.

#### Comment

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¶5. (U) The establishment of RIT and MSU campuses in Dubai adds significant academic firepower to the list of American educational institutions that currently exist or have concrete plans to establish a presence in the UAE. The American

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University of Dubai, while independent, pursues an American curriculum, and the larger American University of Sharjah just graduated from its 10-year affiliation agreement with American University in Washington, DC. Virginia state school George Mason University currently operates a campus in the emirate of Ras Al Khaimah and the New York Institute of Technology has a campus in Abu Dhabi. The largest and highest profile story has been New York University's plans to open in Abu Dhabi. NYU has already made plans for academic conferences and seminars in 2008 and 2009, expects to enroll its first students in temporary space downtown in 2010, and looks forward to opening a newly-built, permanent campus in 2013 on Saadiyat Island (built with a \$50 million investment by Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan). Other institutions, such as University of Nevada Las Vegas, have not yet formally committed but are actively pursuing the possibility of establishing a presence in the UAE (Ref A).  
SUTPHIN